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SOAR Act Seeks to Improve Outfitter and Guide Permitting System

Boulder, CO—The American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) today praised Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM) and Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) for introducing the Simplifying Outdoor Access for Recreation Act (SOAR Act) in the U.S. Senate. This bipartisan legislation makes changes to the outfitter and guide permitting systems of the federal land agencies to make permits easier for outfitters and guides to obtain and less complicated for the land agencies to administer. The SOAR Act will benefit a wide range of businesses and organizations who provide guided climbing and skiing experiences on public lands.

“Outdated regulations in the permitting system have made it time consuming, unpredictable, and unnecessarily difficult for guide services and outdoor organizations to provide guided climbing and skiing experiences on public lands,” said Alex Kosseff, Executive Director at the American Mountain Guides Association. “The Simplifying Outdoor Access for Recreation Act will remove old roadblocks in the permitting system and enable more Americans to experience the joy of rock climbing, mountaineering, and backcountry skiing in forests and parks across the country.”

The SOAR Act makes important changes to current permitting law to streamline the issuance of new permits and increase access for guides. It directs the agencies to simplify environmental reviews, eliminate unnecessary needs assessments, make permit applications available online, and allow agencies to issue a single permit for trips that cross agency boundaries.

“For decades, agency administrators and guides alike have been burdened by unnecessary complexity in the permitting process,” said Matt Wade, Advocacy and Policy Director at the AMGA. “The SOAR Act makes improvements to the permitting system that will reduce agency workloads, expand recreation opportunities for the public, and create new business opportunities for outdoor recreation service providers. This legislation will make the system work better for everyone.”

The bill also makes much needed changes to the protocols that govern how existing permits are managed. It simplifies cost recovery rules, helps to control insurance costs by allowing permit holders to use liability release waivers with their clients, allows permit holders to share unused service days, and provides protections when extraordinary circumstances such as wildfire prevent permit holders from using service days.

“AMGA members, accredited businesses, and the public they serve will significantly benefit from the changes proposed by the SOAR Act,” said Wade. “We look forward to working with members of Congress to ensure its passage.”

Additional information can be found on the [AMGA Blog](#).

About the AMGA

The American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) is a 501(c)(3) educational non-profit organization that provides training and certification for climbing instructors, mountain guides, and ski guides throughout the United States. Founded in 1979, the AMGA institutes international standards for the mountain guiding profession and serves as an educational body for land management agencies, guide services, outdoor clubs, and others wishing to establish internationally-recognized standards for guided climbing and skiing activities. The advocacy arm of the AMGA supports sustainable use of public lands, facilitates stewardship opportunities, and works in cooperation with guides and land managers to preserve access to areas utilized by the guided public.

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